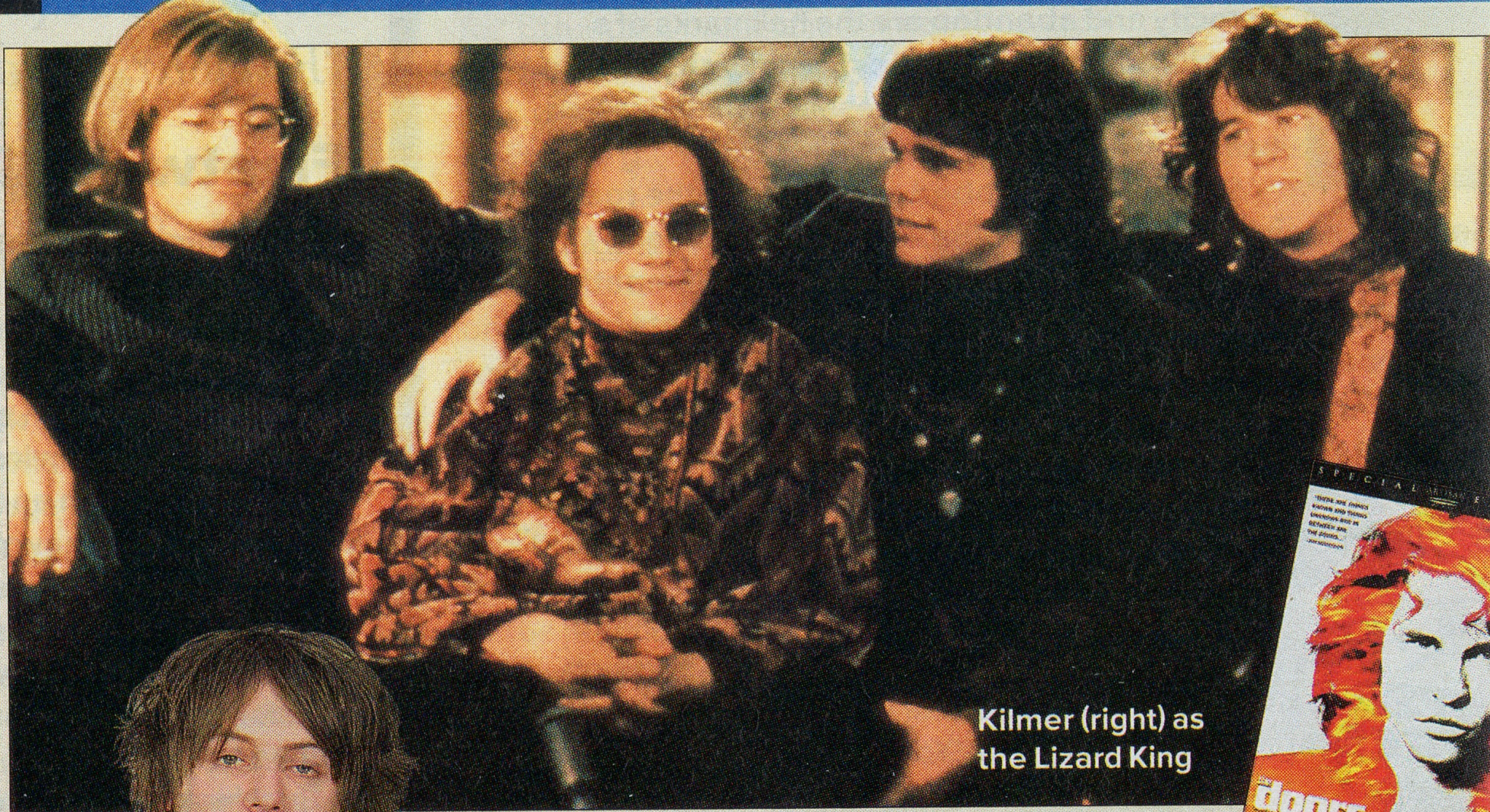




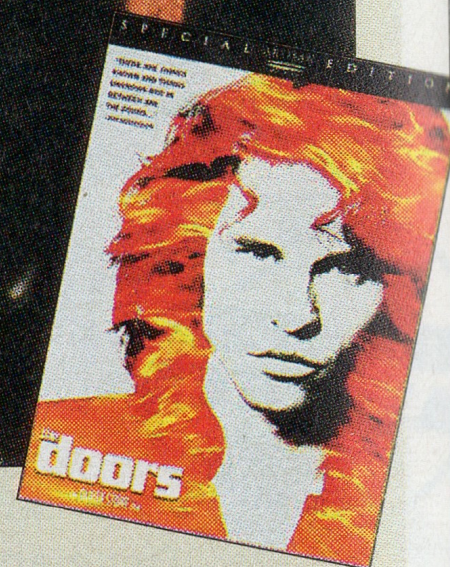
The Vines
in a rare
moment of
peace

The Vines: Loony Tunes

The **Vines** are back for another American tour, led by singer **Craig Nicholls**, the pint-size prodigy who has already earned a reputation as the freakazoid brat prince of garage rock. The last time these Australians visited the U.S., they treated fans to a nonstop parade of fistfights and tantrums. So what do they have planned as an encore? "We're trying to find more ways to incorporate violence into our shows," Nicholls says. "I might get a knife and stab our drummer. I'm not completely ruling that out."



Kilmer (right) as the Lizard King



Craig Nicholls of the Vines

The Doors Directed by Oliver Stone / Starring Val Kilmer, Meg Ryan, Kyle MacLachlan

As far as rock & roll movies go, I think Val Kilmer played Jim Morrison better than he played himself. Yeah, it's great. I really liked it when he met Andy Warhol and didn't have anything to say. That referred to him taking a big hit of something. I think anyone encouraging people to take LSD is a great thing, 'cause I'm doing it all the time. It's important to open minds – not kinda destroy them but open them. But if you keep opening them up, something bad is going to happen. Don't take acid every day of your life and expect everything to fall into place.

● ROLLING STONE DVD reviews use a one- to four-star rating.



The Rolling Stone review

The Vines

"Walk the fields and we stare at the ocean/
Roll the wheel but forget the notion": Singer
Craig Nicholls shows disdain for grammar,
clarity and guitar strings on the Australian
hell-raisers' second album, *Winning Days*.
Highlight: "Fuck the World," a song about
globalization and the word fuck.

Read David Fricke's review on Page 86.

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see and what to buy:

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Cypress Hill

B-Real, Sen Dog and DJ
Muggs cover the Clash, and
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New deluxe reissues of
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NEW CDS



Nicholls, Griffiths, Matthews and Rosser (from left)

Highly Devolved

The Vines push things forward with distortion and pissed-off theater. By David Fricke

The Vines / *Winning Days* / Capitol ★★★



LET'S BEGIN AT THE END, with the best and last song on the Vines' second album. "Fuck the World" is a big, bright ball of distortion and resentment, with massed, charging guitars and a searing knockout chorus. And it sounds exactly like the way you feel when trouble and bullshit drive you to the end of hope and self-control.

Literally, "Fuck the World" doesn't make a lot of sense. As a songwriter, the Australian band's precocious leader, twenty-six-year-old singer-guitarist Craig Nicholls, prefers the *sound* of words, the crunch and color of pronunciation, to mere linear meaning. "Walk the fields and we stare at the ocean/Roll the wheel but forget the notion," he barks through a mouthful of fuzz. "Life was better before was smaller." There is something in there about saving the planet, about globalization and endangered innocence. Mostly, though, there's a lot of *fuck*. Nicholls repeatedly sings, shouts and screams it, in tight, sour choral overdubs and utter noteless bawl, over the band's dirty gallop.

As message, "Fuck the World" is a mess of good intentions. As pissed-off theater, it absolutely rocks. You believe every ugly note, and

you can sing along, too. The only drag: The song should go out in a blaze of chaos, "My Generation"-style. (When I saw the Vines play it live at New York's CBGB in 2002, Nicholls actually trashed their gear.) Instead, "Fuck the World" ends with thirty seconds of amp squeal, too much for a song not even four minutes long.

But that's a rare misstep. When Nicholls, bassist Patrick Matthews, drummer Hamish Rosser and second guitarist Ryan Griffiths put the pedal to their modern-garage mettle and Nicholls pushes his voice to the limits of melody, *Winning Days* is a noisy triumph—as good as their 2002 debut, *Highly Evolved*, and in some ways a leap forward in style and frenzy.

The glut of comparisons to Nirvana, mostly inspired by Nicholls' serrated braying and loose-cannon act on- and offstage, are misleading. Nicholls got the band's name from his father's 1960s Aussie combo the Vynes, and the son's roots, at least subconsciously, go back to the gleaming clatter of the Who's maximum-R&B era and the Sixties freakbeat of the Creation and the Pretty Things. The opening wallop here, "Ride," is an airtight package of extremes: Nicholls' bitter wail; harmonized, ska-like strum; the feedback seeping out of the lead break during the clipped march of the bridge.

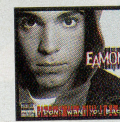
In "TV Pro," Nicholls mixes liquid mercury (psychedelic sustainment, choirboy vocal bliss) with a breakout chorus of nonsense chanting and dogfighting guitars. Nicholls is not re-inventing hard-pop songwriting here. His specialty is decorative flourishes, like the seductive melodic curls and sudden, pensive brake in tempo in the Beatlesque "Winning Days."

When Nicholls drops the speed and goes quiet, his disdain for grammar and clarity can make you wince. "Sun Child" and "Autumn Shade II" are flimsy beauties, deep, pretty breaths between the rave-ups. And the Vines should never play anything slow and heavy, such as "Evil Town." Sludge doesn't suit them.

But do not mistake three stars for faint praise. Nicholls is not as great as the Vines' hyperbolic U.K. press clips claim; he is at least a few years and albums away from God-like genius. But Nicholls has the voice and fire of a winner. In his best songs here—the loud and fast ones—it doesn't matter if you can't figure out what he wants or means. It's the force of his argument that counts.

Key Tracks "Fuck the World," "TV Pro," "Ride," "Winning Days"—for more information, go to rollingstone.com/reviews/vines

Eamon ★★



I Don't Want You Back

Jive

Trash-talking R&B rookie's debut shows promise

THIS STATEN ISLAND TWENTY-YEAR-old materialized this year with "F**k It (I Don't Want You Back)," a delicate, profane slow jam in which he throws his cheating girlfriend out on the curb. The remainder of his debut, produced by Milk Dee, is serviceable R&B: The standout is "I Love Them H*s (Ho-Wop)," which coasts atop a novel sample of "I Only Have Eyes for You," from doo-wop greats the Flamingos. *I Don't Want* sounds charmingly low-budget, but you wonder if this modestly gifted kid has something special inside him that perhaps Kanye West or R. Kelly could coax out.

ROB KEMP

Ben Kweller ★★



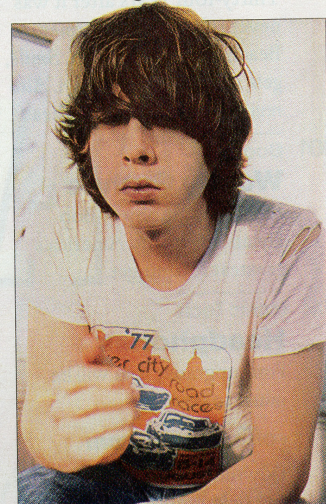
On My Way

ATO/RCA

Alt-rock whiz kid gets serious

IN 1995, BEN KWELLER WAS A WUNDERKIND Nirvana knockoff, leading the teen-angst band Radish. On his grown-up solo debut, 2002's *Sha Sha*, he was an alt-rock whiz kid, trafficking in Seventies-style radio-pop charm. With *On My Way*, the twenty-two-year-old Kweller goes for the toughest tag of all: "career artist." Abetted by producer Ethan Johns, Kweller switches off between meticulously crafted songs about heartbreak and loose live-sounding rockers. Some of his lyrics can feel contrived, betraying a youth spent in recording studios; his best lines are his most artless, as when, in the strummy title track, he marvels at his wife: "She makes hats with her hands/She is such an artist." Until he meets his Bernie Taupin, this kind of emo honesty will have to see him through.

LAURA SINAGRA



Kweller: On his way to adulthood